

JUL 23 1958

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Approved For Release 2004/01/16 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000500340085-0

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Intelligence Failures

THERE IS something to be said in support of the criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency by Senator Wayne Morse, who has charged that information gathering prior to the breaking of the Middle East crisis was "just plain lousy."

The revolution in Iraq came as a complete surprise to our officials in Washington. There was, as Columnist Fulton Lewis Jr. described it the other day, "such a dire inadequacy of diplomatic intelligence that even the Republicans were shocked to their boot tips."

In connection with all of this, J. Edward Johnson Jr., who edits a non-profit publication called "Inform," has this to say:

"I cannot say of my own knowledge that the luxurious Central Intelligence Agency with its vast field staffs fails to come up with the vital information . . . I cannot say that, if CIA does secure information, it is misinterpreted in its lush Washington headquarters. I do not know whether some Alger Hiss hidden in the woods work traps or slants foreign information. Nor can I say of my own knowledge that incompetent analysts give wrong interpretations of information . . . if, indeed, such information is obtained from official field sources . . . But one or more of these faults exist."

Actually, our lack of diplomatic and military information, or of the proper interpretation of what our agents have been reporting, is nothing new. A classic example occurred during the Korean War, when the massive build-up and subsequent attacks by the Red Chinese from bases in Manchuria were not spotted in time to permit counter measures. We were fooled, too, by the Hungarian revolt, while we have missed the advance warning of Russian-sponsored moves in various sections of the world in recent years.

Senator Morse believes "we're going to have to have a thorough overhauling of the Central Intelligence Agency," and there have been sufficient failures to substantiate his position.

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